

Message Text

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SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INDIA'S NEW PRESIDENT,
FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED

REF: NEW DELHI 8815

1. CONGRESS NOMINEE FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED WAS DECLARED THE WINNER OF INDIA'S 5TH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION TODAY. HE RECEIVED 80.2 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTES CAST. AHMED IS THE FIRST PRESIDENT TO HAVE MOVED DIRECTLY INTO THE PRESIDENCY FROM THE CABINET, AND IS THE SECOND MUSLIM TO HOLD INDIA'S HIGHEST OFFICE (THE FIRST WAS ACADEMICIAN ZAKIR HUSSAIN WHO DIED IN OFFICE IN MAY, 1969).

2. BOTH AHMED, 69 AND HIS WIFE 50, COME FROM THE HIGHEST STRATA OF MUSLIM SOCIETY IN INDIA. AHMED TRACES HIS LINEAGE BACK TO THE GREAT URDU POET, MIRZA GHALIB. HIS FATHER WAS ONE OF THE FEW INDIANS WHO MANAGED TO RISE TO THE RANK OF COLONEL IN THE PRESTIGIOUS INDIAN MEDICAL SERVICE. THE BRITISH COLONIAL GOVERNMENT REWARDED HIS SERVICE WITH CONSIDERABLE

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LAND AND WEALTH IN ASSAM, WHICH HIS SON LATER USED AS

A BASIS FOR A 30-YEAR CAREER IN ASSAMESE POLITICS.

3. AHMED WAS BORN IN NEW DELHI ON MAY 13, 1905. HE WAS EDUCATED AT NEW DELHI'S ELITE ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY'S ST. CATHERINES' COLLEGE IN ENGLAND. IN 1928 HE WAS CALLED TO THE BAR FROM THE INNER TEMPLE. HE RETURNED TO INDIA THAT SAME YEAR, JOINED THE CONGRESS PARTY AND BEGAN PRACTICING LAW. HIS CONGRESS ACTIVITIES DURING THE 1930'S AND 1940'S BROUGHT HIM INTO CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH CONGRESS LEADERS JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND MAULANA AZAD. FROM 1937 TO 1966, EXCEPT FOR A THREE YEAR PERIOD, HE HELD MINISTERIAL POSTS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF ASSA.

4. AHMED'S RISE IN THE NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY HIERARCHY PARALLELS MRS. GANDHI'S RISE TO POWER. IN 1964 HE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE AND JOINED THE PARTY'S HIGH POWERED CENTRAL PARLIAMENTARY BOARD AND CENTRAL ELECTION COMMITTEE SOON AFTER. IN 1966 MRS. GANDHI BROUGHT HIM TO DELHI WHERE HE HAS SERVED SUCCESSIVELY AS MINISTER OF IRRIGATION AND POWER, MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MINISTER OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. HE WAS ELECTED TO THE RAJYA SABHA IN 1966 AND THE LOK SABHA IN 1967. HE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SUPPORTING MRS. GANDHI DURING THE 1969 CONGRESS PARTY SPLIT.

5. AHMED IS PERSONABLE, DEEPLY RELIGIOUS, SOFT SPOKEN, COURTEOUS, TACTFUL AND IS INTENSIVELY INTERESTED IN SPORTS. HE HAS BEEN TO THE UNITED STATES TWICE, ONCE AS A MEMBER OF INDIA'S UN DELEGATION IN 1957 AND AGAIN AS A GUEST OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR PLANNING AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN 1964. HE ALSO TOURED THE SOVIET UNION IN 1955 AS THE LEADER OF AN INDIAN LAWYER'S DELEGATION. AHMED'S HEALTH IS UNCERTAIN. HE SUFFERED HEART ATTACKS IN 1966 AND 1970.

6. AHMED'S WIFE, BEGUM ABIDA, IS AN ARTIST WHO SPECIALIZES IN PORTRAITS. THEY HAVE TWO SONS AND ONE DAUGHTER. THE DAUGHTER, SAMEENA, IS MARRIED TO A DOCTOR

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AND LIVES IN FLORIDA.

7. MORE DETAILED BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON PRESIDENT AHMED IS BEING POUCHED.
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